

anthems surnamed Chandos. In 1720 he appeared again in a public capacity, namely as impresario of Italian opera at the Haymarket Theatre, which he managed for the so-called Royal Academy of Music. But Handel was in more than one way disqualified for the post of operatic manager, dependent in those days even more than in ours on the patronage of the great. To submit to the whims and the pride of the aristocracy was not in the nature of the upright German, who even at the concerts of the Princess of Wales would use language not often heard at Courts when the talking of ladies during the performance irritated him. And, what was perhaps still more fatal, he opposed with equal firmness the caprices and inartistic tendencies of those absolute rulers of the Italian stage—the singers. The story is told that he took hold of an obstinate *prima donna* and held her at arm's length out of the window threatening to drop her into the street below unless she would sing a particular passage in the proper way.

It is a question whether Handel's change from opera to oratorio has been altogether in the interest of musical art. The opera lost in him a great power, but it may well be doubted whether dramatic music, such as it was in those days would have been a proper mould for his genius. Neither is it certain that that genius was, strictly speaking, of a dramatic cast. Handel's genius was in want of greater expansion than the economy of the drama will allow of. He is less the exponent of individual passion than the interpreter of the sufferings and aspirations of a nation, or in a wider sense, of mankind. For this reason Handel's stay in England was of such great influence on his artistic career. Generally speaking, there is little connexion between politics and art. But it may be said without exaggeration that only amongst a free people, and a people having a national life such as England alone had in the last century, such national epics as *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Israel in Egypt* could have been engendered.

In the same sense the *Messiah* became the living embodiment of the deep religious feeling pervading the English people, and Handel, by turning from Italian opera to the oratorio, was changed from the entertainer of a caste to the artist of the people in the highest and widest sense. The *Messiah* is indeed the musical equivalent of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. A few remarks may be added regarding his *summum opus* the *Messiah*. Though the score takes up large volumes, he composed and wrote it in twenty-four days. Its first performance took place April the 18th,